

TRANSLATING THE SANSKRIT EPICS

'Translation is betrayal'. Such facile generalisations have been easy to make and popular because they do contain at least an element of truth, for no translation can capture faithfully everything that is part of the original, but equally they obscure and denigrate the important role that translations have played and still play just as much today in introducing speakers of one language to the literature and thought belonging to another language and often also a different culture – a role that is all the more necessary in our modern world.

A central issue is, of course, the nature and purpose of translation. It is too simple to assert that a translation transfers the meaning of a text from one language to another, for not only does this ignore the basic differences between literal translations aiming at a word for word correspondence and less literal ones aiming at a sense for sense correspondence but it also disregards the problem of how far a translation should 'domesticate' the cultural setting of its original or emphasise its 'exotic' nature. Even the apparent closeness to the original of a word for word translation will often in fact conflict with the formal aspects of that text – its metre (if in verse), its syntax and its use of devices like alliteration – which may be better captured in a superficially freer translation. In the past indeed there was quite a debate on the extent to which an original in verse had to be rendered into verse, but this has largely been resolved now in favour of the use of continuous prose for works which are primarily narrative (as are the Sanskrit Epics). Equally, given the differences in syntax between

Sanskrit and European or other non-Indian languages, too close an adherence to the original is likely to create an awkward structure in the translation, giving rise to what is often called 'translationese'. A translation has not only to find a place in the established literary culture of its own language, in terms of genre and register, but also to point in some measure to the situation of the original text within its own culture.

There are naturally specific problems arising from translating epics in any language for a modern Western readership, arising from the oral background and the earlier, 'heroic' culture pattern involved; some of these are then more significant in relation to the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* than, for example, to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. General issues include the frequent occurrence of vocatives addressed to the supposed or actual audience of the original oral performance, the regular employment of formulaic diction, including many standard epithets, and various other stylistic features, of which the commonest is probably the use of stock similes. All of these are likely to strike the modern reader (who will indeed read rather than hear the story) as being repetitious and as slowing the pace of the narrative. Should the translator simply omit many of the vocatives, for example, or adopt other strategies to make them more meaningful for the reader? It has to be recognised that these devices were useful to the epic poets and their audiences – reminding them of features of characterisation, giving the poet and indeed the audience some opportunity to relax for a moment before the next new material, underscoring the implications of particular incidents by the skilful, perhaps ironic use of vocatives (signalled no doubt in the original performance by a change of tone or a gesture, which cannot be reproduced on paper), and so on – and that their omission is likely to alter the balance of the original, but their too slavish inclusion is likely to produce an inappropriate reaction in the modern reader, so different ways of capturing their original purpose have to be found. Again, how far should the cultural specifics – forms of greeting, rituals, the flora and fauna – be kept unaltered at the expense of being meaningless to the reader and how far should they be 'translated' by being replaced by the nearest equivalents at the risk of distorting their true significance? Each translator must face these issues and arrive at his or her individual solution.

More broadly there is the question of what constitutes a translation. Does the term only cover translations of a complete text at the same length as the original (allowing for the necessary differences between the two languages)? Does it cover all the various ways in which the sense of a text can be conveyed: abridgement, summary, paraphrase or adaptation? In the survey that follows the definition of translation will be understood fairly broadly, for practical reasons rather than as the result of any theoretical stance, since one of the aims of this survey is to illustrate the history of the reception of the Sanskrit epics in the West (and more generally outside India).

Another way of putting the 'domestication' versus 'exoticising' issue is to ask whether a translator should give higher priority to adequate representation of the original (often termed 'faithfulness') or to acceptability to its readership ('readability'). Too much adaptation of the culturally distinctive will turn the original into something different, robbed of its specific identity, but too little will leave the reader lacking essential clues as to the meaning or significance of what is presented in the translation. Inevitably, though, translations are coloured by the cultural values of the translator and his readers at the same time as the translator is, or should be, seeking to open for his readers the cultural values of the original author(s). One particular aspect of this is the purpose for which translations are undertaken and this has especial relevance to the early stages of the West's acquaintance with India, since before long the spread of territorial ambitions to India and specifically the establishment of British rule meant that translations were being produced as part of the colonial enterprise. Indeed, from a post-colonialist perspective much of the early translation activity has been criticised as being involved in the appropriation of the culture of those being ruled, in a version of the 'knowledge is power' argument – not that such activity was anything new, for the Mughal emperor Akbar towards the end of the 16th century had both Sanskrit epics translated into Persian (the *Mahābhārata* under the title *Razmnāma*) in order to understand his subjects better.

Translations from Sanskrit, the language of classical Indian culture, into modern European languages have indeed till now largely been dominated by those made into English, with not infrequently translations then made from the English version into other European

languages (although there are several instances of the opposite). This is despite the fact that some of the very earliest translations were made into other European languages. However, these do serve to illustrate the frequency of such indirect translation with, for example, the *Pañcatantra* passing via a Pahlavi translation to the Arabic *Kalila wa Dimnah* and from there to mediaeval Europe, with the first version being Doni's Italian version of a Latin version of that Arabic version; within the field of the epics, the earliest translation is almost certainly a Polish *Bhagavadgītā* published in 1611 and again indirect, since it was made by Stanisław Grochowski (1542-1612) from a Latin translation made by Francisco Benci, an Italian Jesuit missionary (1542-1594) ¹.

The Early Days

The history of direct translation from Sanskrit into English does not begin until the early days of British rule in India, in the second half of the 18th century (in a period when the goal of fluency in translation was dominant, leading to clarity but also a degree of adaptation). Even then competence in Sanskrit was initially so limited that Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1751-1830) translated *A Code of Gentoo Laws* from a Persian version of a text which was compiled by paṇḍits in Sanskrit for the East India Company. This work, published in 1776, was primarily intended to facilitate the administration of civil justice (at a period when the East India Company was advancing from trad-

1. I am indebted for information on this and other Polish translations to Lidia Sudyka, 'Translations and Adaptations of Rāmāyaṇa in Poland', *Indian Epic Values: Rāmāyaṇa and its impact*, ed. by G. Pollet (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 66), Leuven, 1995 pp. 89-94. For much information on other Rāmāyaṇa translations I am indebted to Klaus Karttunen, 'The Rāmāyaṇa in the 19th century European Literature and Scholarship', in the same volume, pp. 115-126. My other source of information not separately acknowledged hereafter is the *Epic and Purāṇic Bibliography (up to 1985) annotated and with indexes* (Purāṇa Research Publications Tübingen, 3), 2 vols, Wiesbaden, 1992; this gives full details for many of the items mentioned (or they can be found in the sources footnoted), so for most just the place and year of publication will be given, but for the earliest, historic items and for recent publications (likely still to be in print) full details will be provided.

ing in India to ruling over the country) but it proved to be of limited value as a legal document, due largely to the defects of the way in which it was produced, and in that respect was a poor return for the investment in it by the East India Company. However, it was a landmark in the process of acquainting Europeans with Indian culture; indeed, contemporary reviewers largely ignored its actual purpose and concentrated instead on the information it gave about the nature of Indian civilisation and Hinduism, contained especially in the translator's preface. Although practical purposes were prominent in this way initially, both religious and literary works were also translated. In this sphere the two Sanskrit epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, were particularly important for, while they have some analogies with Homer or with *Beowulf* from the European tradition, their scale is vastly greater and their impact on subsequent literature within their own tradition is more significant. I shall concentrate on them and in particular but by no means exclusively on the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Parts of the *Mahābhārata* were being translated as early as the second half of the 18th century and editions and translations of parts of the *Rāmāyaṇa* were published from early in the 19th century, although serious research on the epics was slower to appear, starting from the middle of the 19th century. The reason for this is probably that in the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century the main focus of Indological research tended to be the Vedic literature; a number of significant studies on the epics were produced, but the main tendency was to analyse the texts in order to separate older and younger layers. However, in the second half of the 20th century, prompted in part by the completion of the Critical Editions of the *Mahābhārata* in 1966 and of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in 1975, there has been a shift of interest more towards the epics as well as a change in approach with greater emphasis on their mythic and religious elements. Indeed, in some respects, the *Mahābhārata* in particular has become a major focus of Indian studies, with a recognition of its importance for a better understanding of Hinduism and of Indian society.

The first Sanskrit work directly translated into English was indeed the *Bhagavadgītā* (Kṛṣṇa's discourse to Arjuna on the nature of the self and on devotion to the *Bhagavat*, the Lord, found in the 6th book of the *Mahābhārata*) and it has remained much the most popu-

lar, with well over three hundred translations into English alone having appeared up to the present. The first, by Sir Charles Wilkins (1749?-1836), an employee of the East India Company, appeared in 1785 and was published with the encouragement of the Governor General of India, Warren Hastings². Wilkins' ultimate ambition was to translate the entire epic; indeed, in the autumn of 1784, when he presented the *Bhagavadgītā* translation to the Governor General of India, Warren Hastings, as a sample of the whole, he was said to have already completed more than a third of the *Mahābhārata*. However, little more of his translation seems to have been published, apart from the *Śakuntalā* episode in 1794³.

Wilkins's *Bhagavadgītā* translation was heavily dependent on the indigenous commentarial tradition and left many key terms untranslated. It attracted relatively little notice at the time in Britain, certainly by comparison with the sensation caused by Sir William Jones's translation of Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā* published four years later, although there is evidence that the poets Robert Southey and William Blake were influenced by the *Bhagavadgītā* (as were, slightly later, Wordsworth and Coleridge), but it had rather more impact subsequently in America, especially on the 'New England Transcendentalists', notably Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, with a few verses of Emerson's poem 'Brahma' containing echoes of it and

2. *The Bhāgvat-Gēetā, or Dialogues of Krēṣhṇā and Ārjūn*, tr. by Sir Charles Wilkins, London, 1785 [2nd edn, Khizurpoor (near Calcutta) 1809, reprinted by the Theosophical Society at Bombay up to 1885; facsimile edn, Gainesville, Florida, 1959]. Hastings wrote an extended letter of commendation on it, in which he shows considerable acquaintance with the text, while conceding that publication could hardly be justified in terms of the East India Company's commercial activities – a remark with a surprisingly modern ring to it.

3. 'The story of Dooshwanta and Sakoontala extracted from the Mahabharata', tr. by Sir Charles Wilkins, *The Oriental Repertory* 2, ed. A. Dalrymple, London, 1794, pp. 413-452 (a re-translation into French by A. L. de Chézy was published in 1828), and the first few chapters of the whole work in his 'Translation of the Mahabharata Book 1 Section 1-10', *Annals of Oriental Literature* 1, 1820, pp. 65-86, 278-296 and 450-461. Wilkins also, according to van Buitenen (*Mahābhārata* 1973-78, vol. 1, xxxi), published a translation of the Churning of the Ocean from the first book; however, I have been unable to trace this. For some background to his *Bhagavadgītā* translation see my 'Warren Hastings and Orientalism', *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings: Papers from a Bicentenary Commemoration*, ed. Geoffrey Carnall and Colin Nicholson, Edinburgh, 1989, pp. 91-108.

Thoreau incorporating meditations on it into his *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, written 1840-44. In addition, as the first widely available translation of a Sanskrit text into any European language, it was of sufficient interest to be re-translated from English into French, German and Russian within a few years: the French translation by M. Parraud appeared just two years later, the Russian translation by A. A. Petrov a further year later and the German translation by Friedrich Majer after a longer interval (in 1802, with part having appeared in 1791). Another sign of its significance is that it was being reprinted for more than a century after its publication⁴.

Translations of other parts of the epics began to appear from early in the 19th century. The first two were both into German. Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829; younger brother of the better known A. W. von Schlegel) included translations of the beginning of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and of parts of the *Bhagavadgītā* and of the *Śakuntalā* episode from the *Mahābhārata* in his pioneering work of scholarship *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (Heidelberg, 1808; the fourth extract translated was the cosmological section of the first chapter of the *Manusmṛiti*). This was followed by Franz Bopp (1791-1867) including his translation of 'Wiswamitras Büssungen' from the first book of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the 'Kampf mit dem Riesen' from the *Mahābhārata* alongside passages from the Vedas in his *Ueber das Conjugationssystem der Sanskrit-Sprache* (Frankfurt am Main, 1816). The fact that these two pioneering works of Indology both included extracts from the epics illustrates very clearly the high regard in which the epics were held at this early period of European acquaintance with Indian culture. Incidentally, the elder brother, August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845), translated the narrative descent of the Gaṅgā from the first book of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in German hexameters in his *Indische Bibliothek* (1820), while Christian Lassen (1800-76; he

4. Further information on the reception of the *Bhagavadgītā* in the West can be found in Gerald James Larson, 'The song celestial: two centuries of the Bhagavad Gītā in English', *Philosophy East and West* 31, 1981, pp. 513-41, W. M. Callewaert and Shilanand Hemraj, *Bhagavadgītānūvāda: a study in transcultural translation*, Ranchi, 1983, and Eric J. Sharpe, *The Universal Gītā: Western Images of the Bhagavadgītā*, London, 1985.

was born in Norway but worked in Germany) included a Latin translation of the *Vāhikavarnanā* from the seventh book, the *Kaṇaparvan*, of the *Mahābhārata* in his *Commentatio geographica atque historica de Pentapotamia Indica* (Bonn, 1827).

Friedrich Schlegel's and Bopp's use of short extracts only was of course due to their use merely as illustrations of what was their main purpose. But there was a definite tendency in these early days to produce translations of relatively small excerpts from either epic (of which the *Bhagavadgītā* was one of the the most substantial – and the most popular both then and now because of its religious significance) and this is no doubt due to their sheer scale, the more limited acquaintance with Sanskrit literature as a whole by these pioneer scholars, and the lack for a long time of full published texts, while the frequency of such partial translations would have been encouraged by the relatively easy language and style of the epics and the historical and cultural importance assigned to them (an importance that was to some extent greater than warranted).

The Mahābhārata (19th century)

To return, however, to translations of the *Bhagavadgītā* in the first half of the 19th century, we may note that in 1823 A. W. von Schlegel, a leading figure in the German Romantic Movement, produced an edition of the *Bhagavadgītā* with accompanying Latin translation. Latin translations were by no means uncommon in the 19th century and Schlegel's was not only accurate – the German Romantic Movement favoured a literal, 'exoticising' approach – but also of high literary quality; nevertheless it was criticised in a review by A. Langlois (*Journal Asiatique* 4, 1824), to which Schlegel responded by claiming that Langlois had misunderstood the Sanskrit text (*Journal Asiatique* 9, 1826). On the basis of this Latin translation, Jean Denis, Comte de Lanjuinais, prepared a second indirect French translation of the *Bhagavadgītā* (Paris, 1832). The first direct translation into German was that of C. R. S. Peiper a couple of years later (Leipzig, 1834). A Greek translation by Demetrios Galanos (1760-1833) followed before the middle of the century (Athenai, 1848), as the third

volume of his translations from Sanskrit, which included other extracts from the *Mahābhārata*.

Further translations of the *Bhagavadgītā* in the second half of the 19th century include the first Italian translation by Stanislas Gatti (Napoli, 1859), the first direct French one (Nancy, 1861) done in plain but accurate prose and accompanied by a transliterated text prepared by Émile-Louis Burnouf (1821-1907), extracts in Dutch translated by P. A. S. Van Limburg-Brouwer (*De Gids*, 1861), further German versions by Franz Lorinser (Breslau, 1869 – in his commentary on the text he sought to establish that its author had used Christian ideas, a view which also influenced his translation), by Robert Boxberger (Berlin, 1870 – done in rhyming, iambic verse) and by Franz Hartmann (Braunschweig, 1892 – done from a theosophical point of view), the second English translation by J. C. Thomson (Hertford, 1855; in reaction to the many terms left untranslated by Wilkins, Thomson translated everything, including proper names) and others by K. T. Telang included in the *Sacred Books of the East* (volume 8, also containing his translations of two other philosophical passages, the *Sanatsujātīya* and the *Anugītā*, Oxford, 1882) and the well-known and influential version in blank verse by Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial* (London, 1885), coming exactly a century after the first English translation by Wilkins and contributing significantly to the popularisation of the text (being frequently reprinted and re-translated into several languages), though chiefly of interest now for its antiquated cadences⁵. Also before the end of the century come the first translation into Czech by František Čupr (an indirect one, as part of his anthology of philosophical texts, *Učení staroindické*, 1877), the first translation into Hungarian by S. Kegl (Budapest, 1887) and two in-

5. From just after this period comes another collection of philosophical texts from the *Mahābhārata* (*Sanatsujātīya*, *Bhagavadgītā*, *Mokṣadharmaparvan*, *Anugītā*) which has probably been even more significant than Telang's: *Vier philosophische Texte des Mahābhārata* (Leipzig, 1906), translated into German by Paul Deussen (1845-1919) and his young assistant Otto Strauss (1881-1940). Deussen's *Bhagavadgītā* translation was reprinted separately as *Der Gesang des Heiligen* (Leipzig, 1911). A similar collection has also been published more recently in Russian translation: *Filosofskije teksty 'Makhabkharaty'* tr. by B. L. Smirnov (Ashabad, 1977), containing the *Bhagavadgītā*, *Anugītā* and *Sanatsujātīya*.

direct translations into Spanish: one in Argentina by F. Montolin (Buenos Aires, 1893; based on W. Q. Judge's English version) and one in Spain by J. R. Borrell (Barcelona, 1896-97; based on English and French versions).

Besides the *Bhagavadgītā*, another favourite passage in the *Mahābhārata* has been the romantic story of Nala and Damayanti (as generations of Sanskrit beginners can testify) and already in 1820 J. G. L. Kosegarten had produced an annotated verse translation in German (Jena, 1820). Soon afterwards Franz Bopp produced his *Indralokāgamanam: Ardschuna's Reise zu Indra's Himmel* (Berlin, 1824), containing metrical translations of four other passages besides the title one, the last of which consisted of extracts from the Nala episode; five years later Bopp produced, alongside a separate text, the translation of four more episodes, this time all from the third book, the *Āraṇyakaparvan* (*Die Sündflut nebst drei anderen der wichtigsten Episoden des Mahā-Bhārata*, Berlin, 1829) and some years later again a full metrical translation of the Nala episode (Berlin, 1838; this was based on the text of the episode, with a Latin translation, which he had published in 1830 and which proved widely popular). Meanwhile, Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866) produced a truly poetic rendering in German (Frankfurt, 1828; a number of other extracts from the *Mahābhārata* translated by Rückert were edited by Robert Boxberger and published much later: Erfurt, 1876).

The first English translation of the episode was by Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868) in a volume also containing other epic extracts (Oxford, 1835; the Nala translation alone, updated and accompanied by the Sanskrit text, edited by Monier Williams, was reissued in 1879), while a second version was made some time later by Charles Bruce (London, 1864). Other versions of the episode published around the middle of the 19th century include yet another German one by Ernst Meier (Stuttgart, 1847), a Swedish one by Herman Kellgren (Helsingfors, 1852), a Czech one by Auguste Schleicher and F. Šohaj (Praha, 1851 – the first work directly translated from Sanskrit into Czech), a French one by Émile-Louis Burnouf (Nancy, 1856 – five years before his *Bhagavadgītā* translation), and Italian versions by Pietro Giuseppe Maggi (a partial one in his *Due episodi di poemi indiani*, Milano, 1847, which also contains the story of Yajñadatta's

death from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and a complete one in *Rivista Orientale*, Firenze, 1867), by Graziadio Isaia Ascoli (again a partial one in *Studi orientali et linguistici*, Milano, 1854-55) and by Stanislas Gatti (Napoli, 1858, the year before his translation of the *Bhagavadgītā*). Later still, further Italian translations were made by Osvaldo Perini (Verona, 1873) and Michele Kerbaker (Roma, 1878, with a second edition at Torino in 1884), while the first translation into Hungarian (Budapest, 1885) was made by Károly Fiók (1857-1915).

As this outline of translations of the Nala episode has already begun to show, various other episodes of the *Mahābhārata* were beginning to be translated from early in the 19th century, though still sometimes at one remove. Antoine Léonard de Chézy (1773-1832) published a French version of Wilkins's English translation of the Śakuntalā episode (*Nouveau Journal Asiatique* 1, 1828). On the other hand, a 'Translation of three extracts' (*Quarterly Oriental Magazine*, 1824-25) was to form the basis of other translations; these included the contest for Draupadi's hand, her *svayamvara*, and were made by Horace Hayman Wilson (1786-1860; beginning in the medical service of the East India Company, he ended up as the first Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford). The frequency with which certain episodes were translated is clear evidence for fashions in translation, in which this pattern of secondary translation is no doubt one factor, but that in itself is a testimony to the influence of the rapid spread of knowledge about India and the extensive interchange of ideas at this period across Europe.

The middle of the 19th century was then a particularly productive period for translations of episodes from the *Mahābhārata* and others besides the Nala episode produced around then include: into German, the Sāvitrī episode, metrically translated by Joseph Merkel (Aschaffenburg, 1839) and two years later (1841) by Friedrich Stenzler (1807-87), and the *Draupadīharṇa* episode translated by M. Fertig (Würzburg, 1841); into English, half a dozen episodes from the first and third books, the *Ādi* and *Āraṇyaka parvans*, translated by Francis Johnson (1796?-1876) in his *Selections from the Mahābhārata* (London, 1842); into French, three episodes translated by Théodore Pavie in the *Journal Asiatique* between 1839 and 1841 (the *svayamvara*, Arjuna's recognition from the *Virāṭaparvan*, and the

Sauptikaparvan) and these and several more published separately (Paris, 1844), by P. E. Foucaux parts of the *Strīparvan* (*Journal Asiatique* 3e série 13, 1842), the *Mahāprasthānikaparvan* (*Revue de l'Orient*, 1856) and the *Kurāta* episode (*Revue de l'Orient*, 1857), and some extracts translated by A. Sadous (Paris, 1858); into Swedish, the *Sāvitri* episode translated by C. F. Bergstedt (Upsala, 1844); into Danish, the *Śakuntalā* episode translated by M. Hammerish (as part of his translation of Kālidāsa's *Śakuntalā*, København, 1845); into Czech, the flood narrative by Auguste Schleicher (Prahá, 1851); into Spanish, Draupadī's *svayamvara* re-translated by Leopoldo de Eguílaz y Yanguas (1829-1906) from the versions by Wilson and Sadous (Granada, 1861), together illustrating well how the discipline of Indology was spreading so much more widely. Also to this period belongs the major work by Adolf Holtzmann senior (1810-70), his *Indische Sagen* (3 volumes, Karlsruhe, 1845-47), which is known primarily as a work of scholarship but which also includes translations and abridgements of much of the *Mahābhārata*.

By the later part of the century scholarly energies were being directed more towards producing complete translations of the *Mahābhārata*. In French, a translation was begun by Hippolyte Fauche (1796-1869), who had earlier translated the whole *Rāmāyaṇa* (on which more will be said below), and he managed to complete ten volumes himself (the last of which was published posthumously) covering the first nine out of the eighteen *parvans* (Paris, 1863-70), but at a speed which undoubtedly contributed to the considerable number of inaccuracies which it contains; this translation was continued by L. Ballin as far as the *Śāntiparvan* (2 volumes, Paris, 1899).

The first and to date only complete translation of the *Mahābhārata* into English is that done by Kisari Mohan Ganguli, published by P. C. Roy and, after his death, by his wife at the end of the century; Ganguli originally preferred to remain anonymous, fearing that he would not live to see it through, and hence this work has often been known by the name of its publisher. This was highly thought of at the time of its publication and has perforce been the standard translation ever since, despite the extreme awkwardness to modern ears of its late-19th-century English (and correspondingly moralistic tone), which in no way does justice to the easy and direct style of the

core of the epic; it illustrates only too well the limitations of sub-Shakespearian Indian English in capturing the spirit of the original ⁶.

In considering translations of the *Mahābhārata* we should not omit the work commonly considered its supplement or *khila*, the *Harivaṃśa*, all the more so since the first complete translation of it was made appreciably earlier than for the *Mahābhārata*. This was done into French by A. Langlois, though published by the Oriental Translation Fund of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain in an example of the international collaboration that was by no means uncommon at this period (2 volumes, London, 1834-35); several parts of the translation had already appeared in his *Monuments littéraires de l'Inde* (Paris, 1826). A further interest attaches to this pioneering work, translated – not always accurately – on the basis of three manuscripts (two in Paris and one in London), which is that it inspired Henry David Thoreau to re-translate a small part of it as *The transmigration of the seven brahmans* (edited long afterwards from manuscript by Arthur Christy, New York, 1932). The only other complete translation of the *Harivaṃśa* was that into English made by Manmatha Nath Dutt (Calcutta, 1897), which presumably did not have much commercial success, since copies of it are now extremely rare and absent even from major libraries; this is a rather stilted but substantially accurate translation of the Bengal recension. The fact that these two are still the only complete translations, despite their age, is witness to the relative neglect by scholars of the *Harivaṃśa* until very recently.

The Rāmāyaṇa (19th century)

On the whole, as in the later Indian tradition itself, European scholars have until recently preferred the *Rāmāyaṇa* to the *Mahābhārata* (apart from the popular *Bhagavadgītā* and the Nala epi-

6. *The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa*, 19 vols [tr. by Kisari Mohan Ganguli], published by Protap Chandra Roy or (from vol. 16) by Sundari Bala Roy, Bhārata Press, Calcutta, 1883-1896 [frequently reprinted ever since].

sode). Indeed, editions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* were undertaken much earlier than for the *Mahābhārata*, although translations came a little later than for the other epic. The first text and translation began to appear early in the 19th century, undertaken by the Serampore Baptist missionaries, William Carey (1761-1834) and Joshua Marshman (1768-1837), with the aid of a grant from the Asiatic Society in Calcutta. Three volumes appeared between 1806 and 1810 but the enterprise was never completed⁷. The translation is not particularly literary, since the translators' avowed aim was to be as literal as was practical, and there are occasional signs of misunderstanding of the text, but the reason for its choice was its centrality to more popular Indian culture⁸. For the explanatory notes, the editors seem in many instances to have been indebted to paṇḍits for the information, of which a particularly clear example is the way that *mleccha* is merely transliterated as 'Mleechas' and glossed 'The inhabitants of the countries where there is no distinction of cast, and where beef is eaten' (vol. II, p. 18).

A number of episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* were translated into various European languages in the first half of the 19th century. The first direct translation into French was the *Yadjnadatta-badha, ou La mort d'Yadjnadatta* made by Antoine Léonard de Chézy (1773-1832) from a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale and printed at Paris in 1814 but circulated privately rather than sold⁹; nonetheless it

7. It is commonly stated that nothing further appeared and that the fire which destroyed the Serampore printing works in 1812 destroyed both the text being printed and the manuscript of further parts but at least one copy of a large part of the fourth volume has survived and is in the Indian Institute Library, Oxford; cf. my 'William Carey's significance as an Indologist', *Indologica Taurinensia* 17-18, 1991-92, pp. 81-102, esp. pp. 91-93.

8. *The Ramayana of Valmeeki in the original Sungskrit, with a prose translation and explanatory notes*, ed. and tr. by William Carey and Joshua Marshman, vols 1-3, Serampore, 1806-10. [The translation of the first book only was reprinted at Dunstable, 1808.]

9. It was published again in 1826 along with the engraved text and, in an appendix, a literal Latin translation by the classicist J. L. Burnouf (1775-1844), the father of the better known Eugène Burnouf and of his brother Émile-Louis Burnouf, already mentioned. A further edition, along with the corresponding part of Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa*, edited by Auguste Loiseleur-Deslongchamps (1805-40) was published in 1829. Evidently this translation did in due course attract a considerable readership.

attracted enough interest to be reviewed by A. W. von Schlegel and to be translated into Polish (by Walenty Skorochód Majewski in 1816, turned into a metrical version by Ignacy Kołakowski in 1828 and further translated into Russian by Fedor Papkovič in 1819), into English (by Louisa Costello in 1820), into Czech (by Václav Hanka in the 1820s), into Russian (by Dmitrij Koptev in 1844), into Italian (by Pietro Giuseppe Maggi (1817-73) in 1847 as the other half of his *Due episodi*, based on de Chézy's text, despite the fact that Gorresio's was by then available), into Spanish (by Leopoldo de Eguílaz y Yanguas in 1864) and into Portuguese (by Candido de Figueirido in 1875). The *Yajñadattavadha* episode was also included in collections of translations, into English by Henry Hart Milman (*Nala and Damayanti and other poems translated from the Sanscrit*, Oxford, 1938) and into German by Peter von Bohlen (1796-1840), also known as a scholar of Arabic (Königsberg, 1838; his translation was based on de Chézy's edition of 1814).

In 1816 the narrative of Lakṣmaṇa's combat with the giant Atikāya was translated into German from English by C. A. Semler (*Zeitung für die elegante Welt* 16) and into Polish by Majewski (along with his *Yajñadattavadha* translation, at Warszawa), and two years later into French by de Chézy (Paris, 1818). Another extract from the *Rāmāyaṇa* translated into Dutch by Jacob Godfried Haafner (1755-1809, a German by birth) was published posthumously by his son (Amsterdam, 1823), adding yet another language to the growing list of those into which direct translations had been made, and the Viśvāmitra episode was translated into French (Paris, 1839) by the Belgian Eugène Jacquet (1811-38), adding another nationality to the list of translators. Throughout the 19th century, but especially during its second half, awareness of India and interest in its literature, among which the Sanskrit epics were especially prominent (and the *Rāmāyaṇa* even more than the *Mahābhārata*), was spreading well beyond the three countries of early Sanskrit learning in the West: Britain, France and Germany.

A. W. von Schlegel attempted a critical edition based on Paris manuscripts accompanied by a Latin translation but only one volume of the translation was completed (Bonn, 1838), along with just two of the text. Adolf Holtzmann senior (1810-70), better known as a scholar

of the *Mahābhārata*, published a condensed version of the second book, the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, in German (Karlsruhe, 1841 – part only – and 1843; this was the source of a free poetic version in Russian by Ju. A. Romenskij at St Petersburg in 1902), and Albert Hoefer (1812-83), a pupil of Franz Bopp, made a second German translation of the descent of the Gaṅgā which was included in the second volume of his *Indische Gedichte* (Leipzig, 1844). Rather later in the century a very compressed German retelling of the main story was made by the noted poet as well as scholar, Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866), and published in his collected poetical works (Frankfurt am Main, 1868).

Either side of the middle of the 19th century Giovanni Flechia (1811-92), Gorresio's successor in the chair of Sanskrit at the University of Torino, who had earlier published some extracts from the *Mahābhārata*, published translations of the Jāṭāyus episode (*Antologia Italiana*, 1848) and the encounter between Sampāti and Hanumān (*Il Cimento*, 1852), based appropriately on Gorresio's edition, unlike Maggi's version of the *Yajñadattavadha* published a year before the first of these (Milano, 1847). At the same period, in 1851, the first direct translation into Hungarian was made by Lajos Podhorszky, being a rendering of the episode of Daśaratha's death, published in the journal *Új Magyar Múzeum*, with a warm commendation of its value by the journal's editor. In the second half of the 19th century, a number of other episodes were also translated: Sītā's abduction in a metrical and rather free Swedish translation (Helsingfors, 1865) by Otto Donner (1835-1909), selections of episodes in R. T. H. Griffith's *Scenes from the Ramayana* (London, 1868 – a prelude to his complete translation) and Frederika Richardson's *The Iliad of the East* (London and New York, 1870; in a reversal of the more usual pattern, this was based on Fauche's complete French translation, described below), Czech translations of the *Yajñadattavadha* and four other episodes from both epics by Jan Gebauer (in various issues of *Květy*, 1868-69). Italian translations of various individual episodes by Felice Morro (Genova, 1874), Giuseppe Morini (Ancona, 1881) Silvio Trovanelli (Bologna, 1884), Felice Ambrosi (Genova, 1886), A. Ghisleri (Milano, 1894) and Emilio Teza (*Rivista di Scienze, Lettere e Arti*, 1864), and of several in P. E. Pavolini's *Crestomazia del Rāmāyaṇa* (Firenze, 1895), and

finally a Rumanian translation of two episodes from the *Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa* by Georghe Goşbuc in his *Antologia sanscrita* (Craiova, 1897).

However, from before the middle of the 19th century complete translations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* were beginning to appear, somewhat earlier than for the *Mahābhārata*. Gaspard Gorresio (1808-91), the first professor of Sanskrit at Torino, produced not only a complete edition of the Bengal recension (Paris, 1843-50 for books 1-6, with the final book, the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, following in 1867) but also a complete prose translation (Paris, 1847-58 and 1870). With this *magnum opus* comprising both text and translation, Gorresio not only established his own reputation as a scholar but also greatly enhanced the status of Italy in the field of epic studies. The translation represented an important advance for its time but inevitably, with the changes in language that time brings, it has by now become somewhat archaic.

In French, Valentin Parisot (1800-61) seems to have planned a complete translation but only the first volume was published (Paris, 1853); it is in simple French prose, with each verse numbered and paragraphed separately. However, this was superseded by the complete French translation in nine volumes (Paris, 1854-58) by Hippolyte Fauche (1796-1869); like much else of Fauche's work this is far from being completely reliable and rather free but it was nevertheless of sufficient importance to attract a lengthy but critical review – after a considerable interval – in the *Journal Asiatique*¹⁰. Another complete French translation followed at the beginning of the 20th century, done by Alfred Roussel and published in three volumes (*Bibliothèque Orientale* 6-8, Paris, 1903).

The first complete English translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* was a fairly free metrical version made by R. T. H. Griffith (1826-1906), appearing from 1870 onwards (5 volumes, Benares and London, 1870-74, based for the first two *kāṇḍas* on Schlegel's editions and on the Bombay edition for the rest), followed at the end of the 19th century by a literal prose rendering by Manmatha Nath Dutt (7 volumes, Calcutta 1892-94); neither is of any great literary merit, although

10. E. L. Hauvette-Besnault, 'Le Mahābhārata, poème épique de Krishna-Dwaipayana, traduit complètement pour la première fois du Sanscrit en Français', *Journal Asiatique* (6e série) 9, 1867, pp. 205-238.

they do give the reader access to the basic story ¹¹. Also, at the very end of the century, Romesh Chunder Dutt published a condensed rendering into English verse (London, 1899 – the year after his similar condensed rendering of the *Mahābhārata*; they were subsequently combined in one volume as *The Great Epics of Ancient India*); this has had a long life by virtue of the series – Temple Classics, then Everyman's Library – within which it was included, despite its obvious limitations. Also at the end of the century, just the first volume of a projected complete German translation was published (München, 1897), translated by Joseph Menrad (1861-1929); once again, the effort was abortive and there has still not been a complete direct translation into German.

The Twentieth Century

In the first three quarters of the 20th century many more translations were published and sheer numbers make it impractical to attempt anything approaching a complete survey, in which there would be little purpose in any case, since few of them are of real significance. The biggest increase in numbers is seen for the *Bhagavadgītā*. Its brevity and religious character partly no doubt account for its popularity with translators, many of whom have also tackled the *Upaniṣads*, for example both Radhakrishnan and Mascaró, whose translations of this text show the same features of imposing their own ideas on the text (Radhakrishnan imposing an Advaita Vedāntin understanding and Mascaró adopting a romantic approach) ¹². There is space to mention only a few more out of the hundreds

11. *The Rāmāyaṇ of Vālmīki*, tr. by Ralph T. H. Griffith, 5 vols, London / Benares, 1870-89 [repr. Varanasi, 1963]; *Rāmāyaṇa*, tr. by Manmatha Nath Dutt, 3 vols, London, 1889-94 [repr. Varanasi, 1977].

12. *The Bhagavadgītā*, ed. and tr. by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, London, 1948 [frequently reprinted]; *The Bhagavad Gita*, tr. by Juan Mascaró (Penguin Classics), Harmondsworth, 1962. In addition, Mascaró's translation is somewhat free. It is worth remarking that when Siegfried Lienhard prepared a German translation of Radhakrishnan's work (Baden-Baden, 1958), he translated Radhakrishnan's commentary from the English but prepared his translation of the text directly from the Sanskrit.

produced, while noting overall a steady shift from more literal to freer translation, from concern with form to concern with content. Richard Garbe (1857-1927) made a German translation (Leipzig, 1905) which, while it is as accurate as one would expect from such a scholar (even to the scrupulous marking of added words by square brackets), is notable chiefly for his attempt to separate out an original theistic text from later Vedāntin and Mīmāṃsaka additions – an attempt opposed by Paul Deussen (*Der Gesang des Heiligen*, Leipzig, 1911) and by Leopold von Schroeder (1851-1920) in the introduction to his notable *Bhagavadgītā* translation (Jena, 1912) but also pursued by Garbe's famous pupil Rudolf Otto (1870-1937), whose translation, however, is inferior in accuracy to Garbe's (in his *Die Urgestalt der Bhagavad-Gītā*, Tübingen, 1934). By contrast, the recent German translation by Peter Schreiner seeks to let the text speak for itself, presenting its ideas in as simple, clear language as the concepts will allow, using a straightforward prose but indicating the more elaborate verses by indentation of the equivalent section of the translation¹³. In Italian, early in the century M. L. Kirby and C. Jinarājadāsa produced an edition accompanied by Śāṅkara's commentary and a literal translation (Roma, 1905), and subsequently Raniero Gnoli published a translation of the *Bhagavadgītā* accompanied by Abhinavagupta's commentary, which also has a useful scholarly introduction (Torino, 1976), while Giulio Cogni produced a verse translation in a metre modelled on the original (Roma, 1973; with a foreword by Oscar Botto).

Among the English translations two are significant for their accompanying scholarly commentary, those by Franklin Edgerton and by R. C. Zaehner, although in both cases the translation itself is too literal to be aesthetically pleasing (that by Zaehner being the more readable of the two)¹⁴. Two among the many which are specifically

13 Peter Schreiner, tr., *Bhagavad-Gita: Wege und Weisungen* (Klassiker der Östlichen Meditation), Benziger, Zürich, 1991. Another fairly recent German translation, published in the former German Democratic Republic, is that by Klaus Mylius, based on the vulgate and, being intended for the general reader, reading easily, with a good introduction (Leipzig, 1980).

14. *The Bhagavad Gītā*, ed. and tr. by Franklin Edgerton, 2 vols (Harvard Oriental Series, 38), Cambridge, Mass., 1944; *The Bhagavad-Gītā*, ed. and tr. by R.

aimed at the general reader are noteworthy, those by Barbara Stoler Miller and by W. J. Johnson: Miller gives a clear and elegant translation, whose directness and clarity let the message come through clearly, while Johnson's is less showy, even at times pedestrian, but is the most exact of recent English translations¹⁵. One which must be mentioned, even if only for the enormous circulation that it has achieved by sale or distribution, is *The Bhagavad Gita As It Is* by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, first published in 1968 and kept in print continuously since then. It was aimed initially at a Western, indeed specifically American, readership (and thus, in its first edition only, accompanied by 'appreciations' from Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov and Thomas Merton) yet what is most obvious about it is its Indianness, including Bhaktivedanta's total confidence in his own interpretation¹⁶.

It is also of interest to note the increasing range of languages into which the *Bhagavad-gītā* has by now been translated and the countries which are represented in this way. Thus, in Latin America (following the earlier Argentinian translation mentioned above), two translations into Spanish have been published in Venezuela, made by Miroslav Marcovich (Merida, 1958) and by Fernando Tola (Caracas, 1977), the latter made from the Critical Edition text by a major scholar but intended for a general public and done in clear modern

C. Zaehner, Oxford, 1969; incidentally, Edgerton's work also includes in its second volume the once well known metrical version by Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial or Bhagavad-Gītā*, London, 1885. In Edgerton's own translation each line corresponds to a *pāda* of the text printed on the opposite page, while in Zaehner's main translation any word regarded as having been added is marked by square brackets (he also provides another translation along with a detailed commentary to accompany the transliterated text). Accuracy is rated above readability.

15. *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*, tr. by Barbara Stoler Miller, New York, 1986; W. J. Johnston, *The Bhagavad Gita, translated with an introduction and notes* (The World's Classics), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994.

16. *The Bhagavadgita As It Is*, Collier-Macmillan, New York and London, 1968, with an enlarged 2nd edition in 1972, but subsequently regularly reprinted by ISKCON's publishing house, the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. Much earlier, somewhat similar theosophically-oriented versions had been made by William Q. Judge (Adyar, 1890) and by Annie Besant (Adyar, 1904), the latter the first made by a woman and enjoying considerable sales because of its very low price, while both were re-translated into several other European languages.

Spanish. In western Europe, there have been the first complete direct translations into Dutch made by J. W. Boissevain (Amsterdam, 1903), into Icelandic by S. K. Petursson (Reykjavik, 1924), into Swedish by Nino Runeberg (Stockholm, 1922), and into Finnish by Marja-Leena Teivonen (Helsinki, 1975). In eastern Europe, there have been two Polish translations both published as early as 1910 – one was by Stanisław Franciszek Michalski-Iwieski (1880-1961), an able Sanskritist and translator, who aimed for literary effect and used a rather archaic style (Warszawa, 1910), while the other was an indirect translation based on Burnouf's French translation and done by Bronisław Olszewski (Brody, 1910) –, a Rumanian translation made indirectly from Burnouf's translation by D. Nanu (Bucharest, 1932; in the same year Mircea Eliade translated a small extract direct from Sanskrit), translations into Serbian by P. Jevtić (Beograd, 1929), Lithuanian by 'Vyduenas' (Detmold, 1947), Slovak by M. Weinfurter (Praha, 1934), Czech by Rudolf Janíček (Neboli, 1947, again indirect), Georgian by T. Chenkeli (Tbilisi, 1963) and Slovenian by V. Pacheiner (Ljubljana, 1970), a Russian translation by B. L. Smirnov (Ashabad, 1956) which is rather better than an earlier very free verse translation by A. P. Kasnacheyeva (Vladimir, 1909), and one into Estonian by Linnart Mäll (Tallinn, 1980). A translation into modern Hebrew was made by I. Olsvanger (Jerusalem, 1956). Nor should the significant contribution to epic studies being made by Japanese scholars be overlooked; this includes earlier translations of the *Bhagavadgītā* by J. Takakushi (Tokyo, 1921) and by M. Hattori (Tokyo, 1959) and a new edition with Japanese translation and a substantial introduction (Kodansha, Tokyo, 1980), made by Naoshiro Tsuji (1899-1979) who in 1950 had published a translation of selected passages from the *Mahābhārata* ¹⁷.

The Nala episode also continued to be a popular text for translation, in large measure for pedagogic purposes, with few versions having any other merit; for example, there were translations into

17. It is the first volume in a new series of classical Indian texts in Japanese translation (Indo koten sōsho), edited by Minoru Hara, Tsuji's distinguished successor in the chair of Sanskrit at Tokyo University; the establishment of the series is just one more indication of the strength of Japanese Indology.

Polish by Antoni Lange (Warszawa, 1909), into German by Ludwig Fritze (Berlin, 1910, combined with the Sāvitrī episode), Albrecht Wezler (Stuttgart, 1965), Franz F. Schwarz (Wien, 1966; just the first two chapters in a translation that is too free for beginners and contains many archaic terms, despite being intended to introduce classics students to Sanskrit, whereas the index of names would be useful to beginners) and by Egbert Richter-Ushanas (Bremen, 1985; as one of a selection of episodes from the *Āraṇyakaparvan*, including the Sāvitrī episode), into French by Sylvain Lévi (Paris, 1920) and by Paul Émile Dumont (Bruxelles, 1923), into Czech by V. Lesný (Kladno, 1924), into Rumanian by Th. Simenschy (Chişinău, 1937), into Russian by B. L. Smirnov (Ashabad, 1955, with another passage from the *Āraṇyakaparvan*), and into Japanese by Kiyoshi Yoroi (Tokyo, 1989; made from Caland's edition of 1917); there was also an adaptation into English made by Norman M. Penzer (London, 1926), claiming to be closely based on the Sanskrit versions but adding descriptive matter to connect the incidents and in the process losing the vigour and directness of the epic original. The Sāvitrī episode has also been translated quite frequently: into Italian by Michele Kerbaker (Napoli, 1908), into Polish by Antoni Lange (Warszawa, 1910), into German by Ludwig Fritze (Berlin, 1910, together with his metrical rendering of Nala), by Christian Morgenstern (München, 1922, a free poetical adaptation of a Danish translation by Dorothea Reinhardt), in an adaptation of earlier translations by Rückert and Kellner (Leipzig, 1959), and in the selection of episodes translated by Egbert Richter-Ushanas mentioned above (Bremen, 1985).

To pass on to the rest of the *Mahābhārata*, just into the 20th century comes a partial translation into Italian by P. E. Pavolini (Milano, 1902). Unlike the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which had been ably translated in its entirety well before this date by Gaspare Gorresio, the *Mahābhārata* still lacks a complete Italian translation, although many of the more interesting parts narratively are available in a readable translation by Michele Kerbaker (1835-1914), edited posthumously from his manuscript by Carlo Formichi and Vittore Pisani (*Il Mahābhārata tradotto in ottava rima nei suoi principali episode*, 5 volumes, Roma, 1933-39); Pisani also subsequently published a fluent but close prose translation of characteristic episodes from the main narrative, as well as

the Śakuntalā episode, Karna's origin and *Bhagavadgītā* chapters 1-12 (*Mahābhārata: episodi scelti*, UTET, Torino, 1954).

In addition to these partial Italian translations, we may also note: a Russian translation of substantial parts of the epic from the Bombay and Calcutta editions by B. L. Smirnov (8 volumes, Ashabad, 1955-89)¹⁸, on which are based a condensed Rumanian translation by A. E. Baconsky (Bucharest, 1964), an anonymous condensed Uzbek version (Tashkent, 1966) and a Mongolian version by T. Sandag (Ulan Bator, 1970); a German translation of an English condensation by Biren Roy intended for the general reader (Düsseldorf/Köln, 1961; the volume is easy to read and provides a good outline of the main story, though misleading at times because of its varying degrees of compression); the condensed English version by Chakravarthi Narasimhan (achieved by translating some 4,000 selected verses of the original to give the main narrative and some characterisation of the major figures, New York, 1965); the deliberately eclectic and free rendering into English by Purshotama Lal issued in 144 'volumes' – in reality fascicules – by the Writers Workshop (Calcutta, 1968-79; his shorter *The Mahabharata of Vyasa, condensed from Sanskrit and transcreated into English* followed a year later, New Delhi, 1980); the French translation and abridgement by Jean-Michel Péterfalvi (2 volumes, Paris, 1985-86); and a Croat translation made from an English version (*Mahābhārata*, tr. Goran Andrijašević and Slobodan Vlasisavljević, Zagreb, 1989, with an introduction by Mislav Ježić).

Péterfalvi's French translation is made from the vulgate text (Chitrashala Press edn, 1929-36) despite the availability of the Critical Edition, thus reflecting the stance of Madeleine Biardeau (who has supplied an introduction, commentary and résumés of books 12-18 to the work), for she rejects on principle the validity of the

18. The first volume is the Nala translation and the second the *Bhagavadgītā* translation, both noted earlier, others contain 12.175-356 (1961), 3.8-175 (1962), the *Bhīṣmaparvan* (except the *Bhagavadgītā*) and *Mausalaparvan* (1963), *Saṃpātika* and *Strī parvans* (1972), *Anugītā* and *Sanatsujātīya* (1977), 12.174-335 (1983), 12.175-367 (1984) and 3.80-175 and 311-315 (1989). There are also Russian translations of the last two *parvans* of the *Mahābhārata* by O. N. Krylova (*Peterburgskoje vostokovedenije* 9, 1997, pp. 51-68) and of the last three by A. A. Ignatiev (Kahningrad, 2002). I am grateful to Maria Petrova for these details.

reconstruction process implicit in the production of the Critical Edition and more generally the possibility of distinguishing earlier from later parts of the epic; the first volume contains substantial extracts from the first five books of the *Mahābhārata* and the second contains extracts from books 6-11 and résumés of books 12-18, justified on the grounds of the didactic nature of books 12-13 (little as this or the relative compression of book 3 is consistent with Biardeau's basic stance). The note about the work (volume 1, p. 45) declares that it is not addressed specifically at Sanskritists, thus indirectly affirming what is clear from the extracts themselves – that the translation is aimed mainly at the general reader, for whom in its choice of episodes to provide a continuous narrative and in the clarity of its language it is well suited.

In contrast to the *Mahābhārata*, where translations of various parts were more frequent than complete translations or abridgements, translations of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the 20th century have in the main been, in intention at least, complete. However, in countries where the study of Indology began rather later, short episodes were still being translated; for example, in Hungary Károly Fiók produced a translation of the episode of Daśaratha's death for a scholarly journal (*Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny* 24, 1901) and the Sanskritist József Vekerdi (1927-) translated a selection of episodes from both epics to be turned into verse by several well-known poets (*Mahābhārata-Rāmājana*, Budapest 1964) and subsequently separate volumes of selections with bridging passages (*Mahābhārata*, Budapest, 1965, and *Rāmājana*, Budapest, 1978), although in between Ervin Baktay (1890-1963) was producing a complete prose version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in a popular style (Budapest, 1960) to follow his condensed prose rendering of the *Mahābhārata* (Budapest, 1923)¹⁹.

One feature of English versions has been the number of free retellings that have been produced: *Quest for Sita* by Maurice Collis (London, 1946), *The Ramayana* as told by Aubrey Menen (New

19. For details see Eva Aradi, 'The *Rāmāyaṇa* in Hungary', *Indian Epic Values: Rāmāyaṇa and its impact*, ed. by G. Pollet (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta, 66), Leuven, 1995 pp. 95-100, and Ildikó Puskás, 'Indian Studies and the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Hungary', in the same volume, pp. 137-53.

York/London, 1954; a rather idiosyncratic and cynical version of the story), *Ramayana: king Rama's way* by William Buck (Berkeley, 1976), *The Ramayana retold* by Shirin Sabalavaj (Bombay, 1977), *The Epic Beautiful* by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar (an adaptation in unrhymed quatrains of the *Sundarakāṇḍa*, New Delhi, 1983). That by William Buck illustrates all too clearly (as does his equivalent retelling of the *Mahābhārata*, Berkeley, 1973) the drawbacks of such free renderings, unless scrupulously handled, for Buck changes the order of episode and omits others, even major ones (such as the rejection of Sītā) and imports incidents from later versions (for example, Hanumān opening his chest to reveal Rāma's name written there and Rāvaṇa sending a posthumous letter to Rāma on a stone tablet), all without any warning about the liberties taken and to such an extent that the result is a travesty of the original. Another adaptation that has achieved wide circulation is *The Ramayana: a shortened modern prose version of the Indian Epic* by the well-known novelist R. K. Narayan (New York, 1972; republished under the Penguin imprint from 1977 on) and undoubtedly this has often been taken as a very free version of the Sanskrit epic; however, as a note below Narayan's name on the title page states, it is 'suggested by the Tamil Version of Kamban' to whom much of the shift of emphasis is indeed due, although Narayan has also told the story in his own inimitable way. The most useful and interesting of such adaptations is *The Ramayana, condensed from Sanskrit and transcreated into English* by Purshotama Lal (New Delhi, 1981), which, like his condensation of the *Mahābhārata*, is deliberately eclectic but presents a lively version of the story. There has also been a complete translation into English by Hari Prasad Shastri which was reasonably competent by the time most of the initial errors of translation were corrected in the second edition (3 volumes, London, 1952-59; 2nd edn 1962).

In German there has also been a version of the *Sundarakāṇḍa* (*Die Erzählung vom großen Affen Hanumat*, Saarbrücken, 1977), which is much more literal and careful than its title might suggest, made by Richard Simon (1865-1934) but published posthumously (edited by Rüdiger Schmitt), and a condensed prose adaptation by Claudia Schmolders (Köln, 1981), based on H. P. Shastri's English version just mentioned, which perpetuates the errors in his first edi-

tion and adds several misunderstandings of his English, so that in that respect it amply illustrates the dangers of indirect translation, though readable enough in general. In Russian there is the full prose translation by V. G. Ehrman and E. N. Temkin (Moskva, 1965). In Japanese, the complete *Rāmāyaṇa* was translated from the Bombay vulgate by Yutaka Iwamoto (2 volumes, Heibonsha, Tokyo, 1980-85), following an earlier version for the general reader by Tomoji Abe (Kawade Shobo Shinsha, Tokyo, 1966)²⁰. In French, the century opened with the scholarly and competent translation by Alfred Roussel (3 volumes, Paris, 1903) and closed with a collaborative translation made deliberately, like the slightly earlier *Mahābhārata* version in which Madeleine Biarreau was also involved, from the vulgate text and not the Critical Edition and similarly well suited to the general reader²¹.

After the Critical Editions

The publication of the Critical Editions of both epics (the *Mahābhārata*: Poona, 1933-66, the *Rāmāyaṇa*: Baroda, 1960-75) does nonetheless form a watershed, with the second half and in particular the last quarter of the 20th century showing their impact both on research and on translation. One significant result has indeed been to prompt work on new translations of both epics into European languages. The first *Mahābhārata* translation was that into Russian by a group of scholars but the best known is that into English started by J. A. B. van Buitenen (1928-79), neither of which is yet complete²². The

20 I am grateful to Yuka Iwase for supplying further information about various Japanese translations of both epics.

21 *Le Rāmāyaṇa*, traduction publiée sous la direction de Madeleine Biarreau et de Marie-Claude Porcher avec la collaboration de Philippe Benoît, Brigitte Pagani, Bernard Parlier, Jean-Michel Péterfalvi et Alain Rebière (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 458), Gallimard, Paris, 1999.

22 *Mahābhārata*, tr. by Vladimir Kalyanov and others: *Ādi-parvan* tr. by V. I. Kalyanov (Nauka, Leningrad, 1950), *Sabhā-parvan* tr. by V. I. Kalyanov (Nauka, Leningrad, 1962), *Virāt-parvan* tr. by V. I. Kalyanov (Nauka, Leningrad, 1967), *Udyog-parvan* tr. by V. I. Kalyanov (Nauka, Leningrad, 1976), *Āraṇyak-parvan* tr. by Ya. V. Vassil'kov and S. L. Neveleva (Nauka, Moskva, 1987), *Karṇa-parvan* tr. by Ya. V. Vassil'kov and S. L. Neveleva (Nauka, Moskva, 1990), *Drona-parvan* tr. by V.

latter in particular has already played a major role in presenting the *Mahābhārata* to a wider audience and so extending the circles in which it is appreciated. Though left incomplete by his early death, it gives much more of the flavour of the original than Ganguli's translation, rendering the narrative epic verse in an easygoing prose, which is generally contemporary in style, though slightly archaising at times, and reserving a free versification for the verses in longer metres. The translator also adopted the convention – at times somewhat stilted – of using standard translations for key terms, such as 'Law' for *dharma* and 'baron' for the aristocratic, warrior class. Before his death, van Buitenen had published three volumes, containing the first five books, and his translation of the *Bhagavadgītāparvan* (not just the *Bhagavadgītā*, Mbh. 6.23-40, but the whole minor *parvan*, Mbh. 6.14-41) was published posthumously. For a long time thereafter nothing further was done but his former student, James L. Fitzgerald, has now taken up the task of continuing the translation²³.

Attempts at translating the complete *Mahābhārata* have not been limited to European languages, though, nor has their interruption by death. Katsuhiko Kamimura was engaged in translating the *Mahābhārata* into Japanese until his early death in January 2003; six volumes containing the first six *parvans* were published just before it (Chikuma Shobo, Tokyo, 2002). There have also been partial translations undertaken from the Critical Edition, for example Wolfgang Morgenroth's *Das Schlangenopfer: Geschichten aus dem Mahā-*

I. Kalyanov (Nauka, St Petersburg, 1992), *Śalyaparvan* tr. by V. I. Kalyanov (Ladomir, Moskva, 1996), and *Sauptikaparvan* and *Strīparvan*, tr. by S. L. Neveleva and Ya. V. Vasilkov (Yanoos-K, Moskva, 1998); with *Bhīṣmaparvan* tr. by V. G. Ehrman and *Āśvamedhikaparvan* tr. by Ya. V. Vasilkov and S. L. Neveleva in press, and the remainder in preparation. I am grateful for these details to Yaroslav Vasilkov and Maria Petrova (herself now part of the translation team).

The Mahābhārata [Books 1-5], tr. by J. A. B. van Buitenen (3 volumes, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1973-78) and *The Bhagavadgītā in the Mahābhārata: a bilingual edition*, ed. and tr. by J. A. B. van Buitenen (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1981).

23. The translation of the *Strīparvan* and the first half of the *Śāntiparvan*, forming volume 7 of the whole translation, is now in press and should be published in 2004, with the second half of the *Śāntiparvan* following in another two years or so, as James Fitzgerald informs me.

bhârata (Berlin, 1987), which contains many other episodes besides the snake sacrifice, including both the Nala and the Sāvitrī episodes.

The appearance of the *Harivaṃśa* in the Critical Edition of the *Mahābhārata* has had a limited impact, however, for only two partial translations have so far been published, both concerned with the childhood of Kṛṣṇa. André Couture's French translation (*L'Enfance de Krishna: traduction des chapitres 30 à 78*, Paris/Québec, 1991) also includes the list of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu and is carefully and accurately done, although the translation is laid out in the rather antiquated style of usually a separate paragraph to each verse. Couture shows the influence of the French school associated with Biarreau in also translating many of the passages relegated to the apparatus of the Critical Edition, which enhances its value for scholars. The other is a free English translation, which is often more of a paraphrase, of chapters 46-78 by Francis Hutchins (*Young Krishna*, West Franklin, 1980).

The *Rāmāyaṇa* Critical Edition too has prompted the undertaking of translations, of which the most significant is that into English undertaken by a team of translators headed by Robert Goldman²⁴. The first volume was translated by the general editor; although this was published in 1984, Goldman noted that he began work on it around ten years earlier. The relatively equal weighting assigned to introduction, translation and annotation is one of the notable features of the project. The translation itself adopts the style in which each verse is normally numbered separately and starts a new line, an antiquated layout which is distracting to read; while the *śloka* is usually end-stopped, it is essentially a narrative metre and this is obscured by such paragraphing of a prose translation. Goldman's translation of this first book is generally accurate, but lacks verve. The fullness of the annotations is largely due to the prominence given to the theological interpretations of the commentators, which means that Śrīvaiṣṇavism

24. *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmiki, An Epic of Ancient India*, Princeton, 1984- : I, *Bālakāṇḍa*, intro. and tr. by Robert P. Goldman; annotation by Robert P. Goldman and Sally J. Sutherland; II (1986), *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, intro., tr., and annotation by Sheldon I. Pollock; III (1991), *Aranyakāṇḍa*, intro., tr., and annotation by Sheldon I. Pollock; IV (1994), *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*, intro., tr., and annotation by Rosalind Lefebvre; V (1996), *Sundarakāṇḍa*, intro., tr. and annotation by Robert P. Goldman and Sally J. Sutherland Goldman.

is often given greater emphasis than the original meaning and purpose of a passage, especially since less attention is paid to the evidence of the *Mahābhārata*; they are thus of value to the scholar in highlighting the religious understanding of the text at this much later stage in its history but less helpful for an understanding of the text at earlier periods.

The second volume came out within two years of the first volume and the third volume another five years later; both are translated by Sheldon Pollock. In his introduction to the second book, Pollock has some instructive comments on narrative discrepancies over Kaikeyī's boons, while in his introduction to the third, he castigates previous scholars who attempted to isolate an original *Rāmāyaṇa* within the epic and reveals his own commitment to regarding the received text as the basic unit of analysis. Pollock's translation of the second book is more fluent than Goldman's of the *Bālakāṇḍa*, while still remaining close to the original, despite an occasional tendency to over-interpretation; in the third book he tends to adopt a flatter, sometimes long-winded style. Ten years after the appearance of the first volume, the translation passed the half-way mark with the publication of the fourth volume, translated by Rosalind Lefebvre, who has produced a translation that reads more easily than previous volumes, while still staying close to the original. The fifth volume, published two years later, is again by Robert and Sally Goldman and reverts to the pattern set by the earlier volumes of an accurate but rather flat style and copious annotation. The translation as a whole is clearly aimed at a scholarly readership, for whom it has great value, but it has less to offer to the general reader.

A relatively modern English translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* aimed at an Indian readership (as the introduction explicitly states, though elsewhere including material that would hardly be needed by such readers) is that by Arshia Sattar²⁵. Although it claims to be based on the Critical Edition, it includes material not found in the text of that edition, despite its being as a whole an abridgement of the story. The translation reads quite well but the style is jerky and the layout does

25. *The Rāmāyaṇa [of] Vālmīki*, abridged and translated by Arshia Sattar, Viking Penguin India, New Delhi, 1996.

not distinguish between passages of direct translation and summary, while it also contains several mistranslations; nevertheless, it has some merit as an accessible version for the general Indian reader.

In conclusion, what are the directions that translating the Sanskrit epics will take now that we have entered the 21st century? Firstly, there is a need for renewed popularisation, but a popularisation securely based on the advances in scholarly knowledge of the texts (including most obviously, but not exclusively, that achieved by the Critical Editions). The Chicago translation of the *Mahābhārata* and the Princeton translation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* will, when completed, be of great value to other scholars, not only other Sanskritists but also those working in several fields from religious studies onwards; however, they will not make the epics accessible to a broad popular readership and so contribute to their becoming more fully part of world literature, nor was this their aim. That wider readership will be served by the translation being made on the basis of Gorresio's edition of the Northeastern recension of the *Rāmāyaṇa* into contemporary Italian by a band of well qualified scholars; it will be served by the English translations currently being prepared of the *Mahābhārata* (a condensed translation of selected passages, linked by summaries, by J. D. Smith) and of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (a translation of what has been identified as the earliest stage of its growth, by John and Mary Brockington); and it will be served no doubt by similar translations into other languages, especially into those where as yet there has been no direct translation made. Secondly, there is the need for translations aimed at a primarily scholarly readership in further languages, as well as the completion of those in progress. Thirdly, there is the need to pass beyond translation to assimilation – not a mere smoothing away of what is different, as has too often been the case in the past, but a real assimilation where the narratives and characters of these two epics are no longer seen as exotic by European or North American or South American or Japanese readers but become part of a richer world culture.